to be found.

The most striking tendency of our age is our materialistic tendency. We see it in the development of the material arts and the material science; in the desire to see all our theories, philosophical or moral, exemplified in the material world, and the tendency to value the system only for the practice. This tendency often seems to be opposed to another great movement of our age, the idealistic movement.

Materialism fails on the side of incompleteness. Idealism always presents a systematic totality, but it must always have some vagueness and thus lead to error. Materialism is destitute of a philosophy. Thus it is necessarily one-sided. It misunderstands its relations to idealism; it misunderstands the nature of its own logic.

But if materialism without idealism is blind, idealism without materialism is void.

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On Architecture

I've been critical of architecture from the thirties when the Joselyn Memorial was being built in Omaha to now when the AT&T building is being finished. I remember thinking that the Memorial, improbably a Roman art museum, expensively and beautifully made in white marble, in my memory, was completely irrelevant to Omaha and the Midwest. The museum conceded nothing to time, place or life. It was a conventional American idea of a conventional European idea of a Classical past that Europe never understood well. Of course Wright could have designed a real building. This eternal token is coherently made and at least follows some rules. The AT & T building follows only the rules of the New York Department of Buildings. Philip Johnson even says that the structure and shape were standard and that it was only a matter of selecting a top. The building has no style; it's like a speculator's apartment house with Modern, Colonial or Spanish plastic walnut paneling in the apartments as symbols of difference. The top is Chippendale of course; the bottom is Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, thirties Classic and 'Modern'. The Joselyn Memorial is a token of civilization; the AT & T building is barbarism.

Almost all building in the last fifty years is merely building, at best vernacular building, but called architecture, a pretense corresponding to the pretentiousness of the buildings. The history of this building would be similar to the stylistic history of TV sets, beginning with the imitation of the Renaissance cabinet and concluding with the copy of the imitation of the Renaissance cabinet. The history would be nearly as low and obscure. There are very few buildings built by the real architects of this century, such as Wright and van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Kahn, the architects who constitute the history of architecture, who seem to make a brilliant and productive period. Instead the majority of buildings are either a corruption of their ideas or are untouched completely

by their or anyone's intelligence, designed only by the Department of Buildings. The work of the famous architects is used to give an appearance of thoughtfulness to the architecture business. Even this appearance is being debased; it steadily becomes more thin and artificial as commercialism becomes more blatant.

Just as the buildings were unconsidered, so were the cities and countryside. Since its victory in the Second World War the United States has changed enormously for the worse. It became fat the wrong way and in the wrong places. The appearance of much of Europe shows that the change of appearance in the United States was not inevitable, that it was not caused simply by the increase in population and in the standard of living. And the United States is not only ugly but, unlike most of Europe and Japan as well, it's run-down and dirty. Three of the changes that should not have occurred are the spread of suburbia, the development of the strip cities and the redevelopment of the centers of the old cities. These changes, among the most expensive efforts of the country since the war, are destructive in every way and are also contradictory. The strip cities, very ugly, and destructive of the countryside, ruined the city centers by removing business. The city centers were then recreated by artificial economics as status symbols, which in part they were before in a better way, destroying whatever business and decent buildings that remained. The highways of the strip cities were then run backwards into the city centers. This is all bizarre and very wasteful.

Automobiles before the Second World War were much better designed than those after. The early design was based on the taste of the upper class who bought carriages and the first automobiles. This is the class who became rich in the United States from the railroad and its results. They tried to become their idea of the aristocracy of Europe. The automobiles after the second World War are fat and ostentatious, easy symbols, and reflect the taste of a new class, victorious in wartime production and successful in instituting a grand highway system and its results, superceding the railroads and the old upper class. But like the early automobiles,

architecture after the war had a respectable tradition and one that was coping with the questions of industrial construction. At that point architecture was not susceptible to the present ostentation. Now it's being captured by the new upper class, the highway class, divisible into upper, middle and lower mediocre.

The skyscrapers by SOM, for instance, are not as good as the buildings by van der Rohe from which they derive, but they are sensible and pleasant buildings to have around. They make a good vernacular architecture. They're not offensive. An important consideration in regard to something as hard to make and destroy as buildings is that a style trickle down well, as van der Rohe's does in Chicago and as his and that of the Bauhaus does in northern Europe. The 'post-Modern' 'style' can't trickle down because it's trickled up from the expediency and symbols of the strip city. The myth is no longer that the primitive knows best, or the peasant, or the worker, but that the middle class knows best. (The new upper class is really middle class.) The skyscrapers – unnecessary always – of the 'Post-Modern' architects are imitations of the practices of building in the strip city, in which the structure is mass-produced and is barely variable, resulting in nearly identical buildings. Only the sign in front and the style, usually historical, of the main doorway distinghuishes the store which sells carpets from the one that makes car parts.

The fins, the statue on the radiator, the chrome and the color of the fat automobiles are signs of status to be read; the doorways of the strip city are the same; now the skyscrapers are given adventitious status by the signs of history. Everything is to be read; nothing is to be appreciated. The symbols and materials of the shopping center along the strip, which signify things better than they, but which are not actually desired, become finally the symbols and materials of the skyscrapers in the city center. Somewhere there is a real carpet and somewhere a board made of walnut, but, as with Plato's forms, they are elsewhere and that's enough. Daily life occurs on wall to wall plastic carpets within plastic walnut panelling, the daily life of everyone from the upper lower class to the upper upper class. The

businessmen who made their money in the strip city in a plastic office under a mansard roof on a one-story portico attached to a store made of corrugated iron return to town and commission plastic skyscrapers with doors of ersatz history.

'Post-Modern' is nonsense since 'modern' means only modern, which is now. The term is cant since the rather small influence of the 'modern' architects is held responsible for the banality of all architecture and since then this supposedly dire influence is attacked by those who claim to want something more, often some of the same architects who debased the style of van der Rohe to the 'International Style'. This is two strawmen wrestling. An example of such cant is a remark by Wolf Von Eckardt in *Time Magazine:* "The most recent new neighborhoods, Ramot, East Talpiot and Gilo, on the outskirts, have also eschewed Bauhaus banality in favor of Jerusalem architecture. That is quite a feat in a world in which most new housing from Alaska to Zanzibar looks distressingly alike." Did the Bauhaus make A to Z look distressingly alike? Was it banal? A prominent aspect of the present is the casual distortion of the past. The good-old days or bad-old ones are used to good or bad-mouth the present without any thought as to how large or small the old events were; it's important only that the old events look big in the history books so that it seems like a large public was excited by them. In arguing for a return to religion, Daniel Bell says, as is often said, "Forty years ago, you had Stravinsky, Kandinsky, the birth of modernism. Where's the excitement in art today? And science?" Kandinsky and Stravinsky worked in a society uninterested in them, just as we work in this one. Maybe Bell doesn't know much about art and science now, or then. He can't if he's excited about religion.

For a long time and to completion now art and architecture have grown apart. The simplest reason for this is that architecture as a useful activity is thoroughly within the society, within its conventions, its institutions and their bureaucracies and is definitely in business, while art is usually peripheral to the society, made by outsiders willing to be poor. This is changing however and art is

threatened by these encumbrances. Architecture for most is a profession, a career. Until lately art has been something you do if you need to do it and like to do it. There's a big difference. The division between art and architecture is a result of this difference in attitude and in position within the society. The division is an expression of the poverty of this civilization. Generally architects – not all – regard art with a certain defensive interest, as an erstwhile spouse who does better than they. Many architects ignominiously mine new and old art for ideas to paste upon their buildings by the Department of Buildings. The extent of derivation taken seriously in architecture is laughable in art.

For artists, other than the corruption of their ideas, the chief result of the separation of art and architecture is that when some art is needed it's wanted after everything is over. The artist is summoned to present a 'proposal' along with other artists, introducing a competition that some artists consider alien, for a site that the planners or architects have already determined or built. The latter avoid a viewer's elementary choice of which artist to prefer and haven't considered the art beyond the elementary problem of putting it down somewhere. The 'sculpture' was merely a symbol on the plans and suddenly it's about to occur, along with an artist. A grant or a percentage clause, even 'culture' or liberality, forces the art upon the planner, the architect, the administrators and the omnipresent businessmen, who still don't know anything about art, or architecture either, are proud of it, and still know what they like. The art is an embarassment. It's made by people they don't understand; it's not made by those who fit into a career pattern or are out to get rich fast. The art doesn't correspond to the few rules taught in grade school design. It doesn't fit into the seven deadly conventions of the society or any of the venial clichés.

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